

Severall

QUESTIONS

O F

Serious and necessary Consequence,

Propounded by the

Teaching Elders,

Unto M.^RJOHN COTTON of Boston
in New-England.

W I T H

His respective Answer to each Question.

Feb: 22

L O N D O N,

Printed for Thomas Banks, and are to bee sold in Black-
Friars on the top of Bride-well Staires, and in West-
minster Hall, at the signe of the Scale. 1647. 1646

Several

QUESTIONS

OF

Serious and necessary Considerance,

Propounded by the

Teaching Elders,

Under M. John Cotton of Boston

in New-England.

W I T H

Harrespctive Answer to each Question.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Thomas Bask, and are to be sold in black
Tins on the top of Bride-well Stairs, and in Well-
minster Hall, at the signe of the Scale. 1644.

(1)

Certain Questions propounded by the
teaching Elders in the Bay, to M. John
Cotton Teacher in the Church of
Boston.

Quest. I.

What the Seale of the Spirit is?

Answer.

The Seale of the Spirit is taken by some good Divines to be the sanctification of the Spirit, as that which like a Seale:

- | | | |
|--|---|----------------|
| <p>{ 1. Distinguisheth,
2. Consenteth,
3. Confirmeth</p> | } | the faithfull: |
|--|---|----------------|

Others take it for the Witnesse of the Spirit it selfe, as it is distinguished from our Spirit, *Rom. 6. 18.* In which sense it is commonly used by our Brethren in the Church: Though I my selfe doe generally forbear to call it by that name, and do not usually call it the Witnesse of the Spirit, least I might give offence to any, who may conceive the Seale of the Spirit to be more generall.

Quest. II.

Whether every Beleever be sealed with it?

Answer.

Every Beleever is not sealed with the Seale of the Spirit, if the Seale be taken for the Witnesse of the Spirit it selfe, but in the former sense, all Beleevers be sealed with it.

Quest. III.

What ground from the word of that Distinction, a Broad Seale, and the other Seale, and the difference between them.

Answer.

I know no such Distinction between the Broad Seale and the other Seale: Nor was that Distinction propounded by any of our

Members, but by one of your selves, who expressing his conception in that Speech, one of our Members answered him according to his meaning in his own word, if you call it so, saith he; Nevertheless thus much may truly be said: There is a difference betweene the Witnesse of the Spirit, as it regenerateth and reneweth our spirits; and the Witnesse of the Spirit as it comforteth us with evident assurance of our Adoption, Rom. 8. 16.

Quest. IV.

Whether a man may or ought to see any saving worke of Christ in himselfe, and take Comfort from it, before he be sealed by the Spirit?

Answer.

A true Beleever may and ought to see (if it be declared to him in the use of the means) any work of Christ in himself that he accompanieth salvation (as *Cornelius* did) before he be sealed with the witnesse of the Spirit it selfe: yet full settled comfort he cannot take, nor rest in, till it be witnessed unto him by the Spirit: for Comfort without the Word is false Comfort, and neither Word nor Spirit, doe teach us to take any Comfort so much from the Worke of Christ in us, as from the Object of it.

Quest. V.

Whether the testimony or Seal of the Spirit be so cleare, as to witness immediately by it self, without respect of any work of Christ in a man, or so constant, that it being once obtained, a man doth never after question his Estate?

Answer.

The Testimony of the Spirit is so cleare, as that it may witness immediately, though not without some work of Christ in a man, yet without respect unto the Works: Nevertheless it is not so constant or permanent, at least not in all Beleevers) but that a man after he hath received it, may come in time of temptation to question his Estate, though not so frequently nor so desperately as before.

Quest. VI.

Whether a Christian may maintaine like constant Comfort in his soule, when he hath fallen into some grosse sinne, or neglected some knowne duty, as when he walked most closely with God.

Answer.

A Christian man cannot find like constant comfort maintained

(3)

to his soule, after he hath fallen into sin, whether of Commission or Omission, as when God keeps him in a close walking with him: For the Spirit of God in him being grieved, (and grieved it is by any grosse sin especially) it will not speak wonted Peace and Comfort to him. If David fall into such grosse sins, as *Adultery* and *Murder*, it cannot be, but the bones of his comfort will be broken, *Psal. 15. 8.* Nevertheless, the assurance of a mans good Estate may be maintained to him, when the frame and course of his spirit is growne much degenerate, *Isai. 63. 16.*

Quest. VII.

Whether a weake Believer may not warrantably apply some promise to himselfe as given by God, although he doth not yet discern his interest in it by the Broad Seale of the Spirit?

Answ.

A weak Believer may warrantably apply some promise to himselfe, and may have it also given him of God, even whilst he is yet waiting for it, before he can discern his interest in the promise, by the witness of the Spirit it selfe: For the soule that waiteth for Christ, may come to see and know (by his renewed knowledge) that he doth waite; and may from thence conclude, that he on whom he waiteth, will not absent himself for ever.

Quest. VIII.

Whether a Christian must of necessity have his first assurance from an absolute, and not from a conditionall promise?

Answ.

A Christian mans first assurance doth arise from the Spirit of God, applying Gods free grace in an absolute promise. Or if in a conditionall promise, it is not to workes, but to faith, and to faith, not as it is a worke, but as it revealeth the free grace of God offered, and applied in Christ Jesus.

Quest. IX.

What you meane by Christian sanctification, whether immediate acting of the Spirit, or infused Habits: If habits infused, whether such as are contrary to corrupt Nature, and all vicious Habits: and if so, whether you must not mean the Image of God in Adam renewed in us, to be our sanctification?

Answ.

I meane by Christian sanctification, the fruit of the Spirit of Christ

(4)

Christ dwelling in true Beleevers, working and acting in us, both infused *Habits* and actions of *Holinesse*, contrary to all vicious *Habits* and actions of corrupt *Nature*. And yet I do not mean, that the Image of God in *Adam* renewed in us (and no more then so) is our sanctification: our sanctification in Christ hath in it this more; Faith in the Righteousnesse of Christ, and Repentance from dead Works, (and that which is the root of all) the indwelling power of the Spirit, to act and keep Holinesse in us all, which *Adam* wanted.

Quest. X.

Whether this sanctification being discerned by us, be not a true Evidence of Justification?

Answ.

If this sanctification be evidently discerned, it is a true evidence of Justification, *a Posteriori*, as Justification is likewise a true Evidence of Sanctification, *a Priori*.

Quest. XI.

Whether sanctification being discerned, may not bee, and often is a ground of Primitive Comfort, as it is an evidence of our being in Christ?

Answ.

I doe not beleeve that this sanctification being discerned, is a ground of Primitive Comfort, though when it is evidently discerned, it be an evidence of our being in Christ. I conceive our faith depending on Christ is as soon discerned, and sooner then our sanctification by Christ; and yet, neither will discerning of it yeeld settled comfort to the soule, till the Spirit of God doth witness from Christ, Gods thoughts of peace towards him.

Quest. XII.

Whether when my sanctification lyeth prostrate, I may not prove my self in a state of Grace by my sanctification?

Answ.

If my justification lyeth prostrate, that is, altogether dark and hidden from me, I cannot prove my self in a state of Grace by my sanctification: For whilst I cannot beleeve that my person is accepted in justification, I cannot beleeve that my works are accepted of God, as any true sanctification.

Quest. XIII.

Whether evidencing justification by sanctification, be a building my justification on my sanctification: or a going on in a Covenant of Works.

Ans. To evidence my justification by my sanctification, though it may seem at first blush a plaine and evident *Phrase*, yet is it indeed ambiguous, or at least obscure: Give me leave to cleare the sense of it and then give you mine answer. To evidence my justification by my sanctification, is no more at first hand then to give or hold forth my sanctification for an evident Argument of justification: Thus farre the *Phrase* is plain. But now when I give it for an evident Argument, I may give it either for an evident cause or ground of my justification, or for an evident signe or effect of it. Again, when I give it for an evident sign of justification, I may either give it alone for an evident sign (having nothing els to shew for my justification) or I may give it for a concurrent signe, together with other signes and witnesses, which may make both my justification and my sanctification evident and cleare to my selfe and others. Having thus cleared the ambiguity and obscurity of the *Phrase*, I give you mine Answer distinctly in these severall *Propositions*.

Proposition. 1.

To give my sanctification for an evident ground, or cause, or matter of my justification, is to build my justification upon my sanctification, and to go on in a Covenant of Works.

Propos. 2.

To give my sanctification for an evident ground or cause of my faith, whereby I am justified, as when I doe not nor dare not depend upon Christ for my justification, till I evidently see my sanctification, this is also to build my justification on my sanctification, and to go on in a Covenant of works. For sanctification (or which is all one) good workes are not the cause of justifying faith; but justifying faith the cause of them.

Pro.

To give my sanctification for an evident cause and ground of my faith (not whereby I am justified, but) whereby I beleeve my self to be justified (which they call the *Faith of Assurance*) this may be a building my justification on my sanctification, or a going on in a *Covenant of Works* two waies:

1. If the soule have no evidence of his dependance upon Christ for righteousness, nor no evidence of his effectually calling unto Christ, and unto faith in Christ (by the Fathers drawing him to come to him) but onely he seeth an evident change in himselfe, from a prophane and civill course to a sanctified conversation; or at least, upon that which is worse, to wit, upon that which seemeth true Christian sanctification, which indeed is not, but a legal Reformation. For when a man hath been humbled under the Spirit of bondage by the terrors of the Law, yet he may never come to feel his need of Christ, nor his own insufficiency or unworthiness to receive him.

1. Restraining grace to keep him from known sinnes.

Though he may obtain } 2. Constraining (or exciting) Grace to pro-
voke him to duty (or else his Conscience
sometimes terrified by the Law would flye in
his face.

And though in this way he may finde comfort (as the stony ground did, and thorny soyle much more) and so from this great change hee may build up to himselfe the faith or *Assurance* of his justification, yet in truth, in so doing he buildeth upon such a sanctification which is indeed a sandy foundation.

2. To give my sanctification for an evident ground or cause of faith, whereby a man beleeveth himselfe to be justified, may be a building of justification, upon a sanctification in another case: to wit, when we shall give a man no other ground or evidence of his justification, but onely from the evidence of his sanctification: For the Publican did not (as the Pharisee thought himselfe did) see any evident fruits of his sanctification, but was deeply affected with the sense of his sinnes, so that he smote his breast with the Anguish of sin, and durst not lift up his eyes to heaven through confusion of face for sinne, but only cryed out to God to be mercifull

cifull unto him in this sinfull estate: and yet by our Saviours own judgement. this man went home justified, rather then the other (*Luk. 18.*) though he saw no evidence of his *sanctification*, but rather Evidence of his sinfull corruption. If any of our brethren doubt hereof, I would pray them to call to minde what some of them that lived in *Essex* have heard our brother *Hooker* and Master *Rogers* also teach soundly, and argue out of the Word; that there be saving graces which are not sanctifying, but are wrought before *sanctification*, which yet may beare witnesse to a safe estate (and I may adde to Fellowship with Christ, for there is no safety but in him) before the soule can see any evidence of his *Sanctification*.

Propos. 4.

A man may give his *sanctification* for an evident ground or cause of his faith whereby he is justified, and yet sometimes not build his *justification* upon his *sanctification*, nor be under a *Covenant of workes*, but only sometimes go aside to a *Covenant of workes*: As in case, when a man is truly justified, and seeth it not, he doth then betake him to his workes for the hastning of his assurance. As *Abraham* when he had long waited for the Promised Seed, thought he was justified by beleiving the free Promise: yet for the more speedy satisfying of his faith and hope, he turned aside to go into *Hagar* (who was a *Type* of the *Covenant of workes*) for the hastning of his sight and fruition of the promised Seed: So there be sundry Children of *Abraham*, even of his elect Seed, that having been driven out of their sins by a Spirit of Bondage, and finding a need of Christ, and their own insufficiency and unworthinesse to receive him: do therefore seek and wait for him (by the mighty power of God) in every Ordinance and Duty. Such men are already truly justified, though it may be as yet they do not know so much, because this their seeking and waiting for Christ, in the sense of their own need & emptiness, and unworthiness, is a true act of a lively justifying faith. But now if such souls, because God may tarrie long, before they can see and feel Christ given to them, shall therefore seek Christ in their owne workes or *sanctification* and in the promises and blessing given to such workes and not finding such workes, can finde no Peace nor Assurance: such soules, though they doe not build their *justi-*

fication upon their *sanctification*; for indeed they were truly justified before, while they depend on CHRIST for righteousness, according to the free Promise of Grace, and so are truly under a *Covenant* of Grace, yet they goe aside to a *Covenant* of *works*, as unto *Hagar*, to bring forth to the sight of Christ, the seed of promise, whom they so long waited for. The failing of such soules is this, that they having Christ laid in their hearts, as the foundation of their *justification*, though they know not so much. Upon this golden and precious foundation they build hey and stubble, in seeking, and setting, and grounding their faith of *assurance* not upon Christ, nor upon the free promise of grace, nor upon the *witnesse* of the spirit it selfe applying the same, but upon the holiness of their owne workes. In which case they are often put to many and sad doubts, ever and anon renewed upon them, till the faith and confidence, which they had built upon their own workes, be at length burnt up with the fire of temptation, and the clearer day-light of Gods Word and Spirit. And then, though their owne workes and their owne building thereupon be burned, yet their soules will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Propos. 1.

The soule that hath lyen under the terrors of the Law, and cometh afterwards to see and feele his need of Christ, and his owne strength and worth to receive him, and doth depend upon Christ for *righteousness* and *mercy*, he may come in his estate to see, by his renewed knowledge, his dependance on Christ, and withall some fruits of *sanctification*, that flow there-from, as prayer, sometimes, with unutterable sighs and groanes, brokenness of spirit, mourning for sight of Christ, longing desire after the sincere *Milk* of the word, love of the Ministry that wounded him, &c. And seeing God helping him here, he may thereby gather, that he that hath begun to help him, will go on to help him still. But yet to give these for certain evidences of his *justification*, the poor soule dare not, though another Christian of better discerning, may justly so apply to him as good evidences of his justified estate. But neverthelesse he will still seek and wait for further and clearer fellowship with Christ, till the Spirit of God himself do witness to him, the gracious thoughts of God towards him in a
free

free Promise of Grace, before he can plead his own good works, (whether after Conversion or before) for good evidences of his justification. For (as it hath been observed by some of our godly learned Countrymen) the graces of Gods Spirit in our Soules, are like the Stars in the Firmament, which shine but with a borrowed Light from the Sun: If the Sun were hid from them, their Light would be obscure: so is the light of our graces, if the Spirit of God do hide his light from us.

Propos. 6.

But now if the Spirit of God do shew abroad his light into such a Soule, and give him a clear sight of his estate in a free Promise of grace in Christ; such a one evidently discerneth both his justification and his sanctification; and the one of them giving good Evidence to the other, the blood to the water, and the water to the blood, and the spirit to both, 1 John 5. 9. 8. And thus in evidencing his justification by his sanctification, he doth not build his justification upon his sanctification, nor hereby go on in a Covenant of works, nor go aside to it.

Propos. 7.

But though the Soule may gather knowledge of his estate, from such Evidences of Sanctification, yet if he shall therefore build his justifying Faith upon such evidences, he shall againe go aside to a Covenant of works, though his person may be under a Covenant of grace. For justifying Faith cannot safely build or rest upon any ground, save only upon Christ and his Righteousnesse.

Quest. XIV.

Whether a Christian be not further active after Regeneration, then before, if there be a difference, wherein it lyeth?

Answer.

A Christian is more active after Regeneration then before, before Regeneration we are not active at all in any spiritual Christian Action, no nor in Proximum Potentiam, Passive to receive helpe from God to do it, but after Regeneration, Acti Agimus. If wee act and go forth in the strength of our own Spirituall Gifts, without looking up to Christ, we fall as Peter did, Math, 26. 23.

Quest. XV.

Whether it be not a safe way to conclude my safe estate by my practical Reasoning?

Answer.

Answer.

It is not an unsafe, but a lawfull way to conclude a mans safe estate by way of practicall reasoning, so it be, the reason be not carnall but spirituall. One Proposition being expressed in the Word, or safely deduced thence; the other being experimental observation of a good conscience, enlightened by the Spirit of God, and looking up to Christ to cleare the conclusion from both. Nevertheless a good conscience will not satisfie himselfe in this way till it be established by the *witnesse* of the Spirit; or if it should so satisfie or rest it selfe for a season, God will awaken it in time, to a sense further need of Christ.

Quest. XVI.

Whether a Christian may not presse the Lord for Spirituall Mercies, with Arguments drawne from the graces of Christ in himselfe?

Answer.

A Christian soule is more usually wont to presse the Lord for Spirituall Mercies, by Arguments drawne from his owne Spirituall miseries and infirmities, then from the graces of Christ in himselfe. Nevertheless the Saints do also make use of Arguments drawne from the graces of Christ, when they doe discern the same in themselves, but they are usually such graces whereby they go out of themselves, and their owne strength and worth, (as faith, hope, desire, seeking, waiting, &c.) or such as doe expresse their Spirituall bent and inclination, or affection, which they desire might be quickned and satisfied with their Spirituall proper *Object* or end, but the force of their Arguments from those graces is fetched not from the force, or fulness, or power of them, but from the weaknesse and emrinesse of them.

Thus have you (according to your desire) a plain and short Answer to all your demands, except the thirteenth; which being exposed to greatest agitation, and exception, I have spoken the more largely and distinctly to it; that so, I might avoid carefully, as I see it needfull, all suspicion of ambiquity and obscurity.

Now the *God of Truth and Peace* lead us by his *Spirit of Truth* into all *Truth*, through *him*, who is made unto us of *God*, the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*, AMEN.

F I N I S.



GALLANT
NEVVES
FOR
LONDON.

FROM

His Majesties Royall Court at HOLMBY;

Wherein is set forth, three remarkable Passages, to be
presented to the Citizens of London,
VIZ.

*Charles I.
(app.)*

- The {
1. Concerning the Kingdome of Ireland.
 2. Concerning General Fairfax.
 3. Concerning the Kingdome of England.



Printed & published, and to be presented, to the view of all
His Majesties loyall Subjects, 1647. 1646

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